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AUTHOR Lundsteen, Sara W.
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ABSTRACT

Ethnographic research (1) observes human behavior in its natural setting over a substantial period of time, (2) claims that classes of events are better understood through intensive examination of carefully selected particular cases, (3) incorporates as many of the complexities and variables into a setting as possible, and (4) is usually comprised of six main steps. First, the appropriate project is selected. Second, access to the appropriate location is obtained and rapport with proper individuals is established. Third, research questions evolve as the subjects are observed. Fourth, data is collected through reactive and nonreactive methods. The former method involves participant observation, interviews, and surveys. Nonreactive data collection, which ensures validation and reliability, involves the physical documentation of events. As the study develops, the observer's role undergoes the following transition: nonparticipant observer, transient observer, participant observer, and observing participant. Fifth, data analysis proceeds inductively, and occurs both during and after an investigation. Sixth, the research report is generally descriptive, letting generic patterns emerge from a sum of particular pieces of data. (The paper specifically considers the relation and advantages of an ethnographic approach to gifted education. It includes a consideration of possible research questions and supplementary figures detailing data measurement.) (JD)

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Ethnographic Perspective:
From Beginning to Final Product

Speaker: Dr. Sara W. Lundsteen
North Texas State University
and
Creative Studies Institute

Paper presented at the Midwinter Institute of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), February 28, 1986, in Dallas, Texas.

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PROF. SARA W. LUNDSTEEN
4223 SHADY BEND DRIVE
DALLAS, TEXAS 75244

ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

The discipline of ethnographic research has a special orientation that distinguishes it from quantitative research. Perhaps researchers imply too much of a dichotomy. Most research is both qualitative and quantitative. Ethnographers may talk a lot about frequencies and intervals; it's not that they never count things. But ethnographers do have a definite point of view.

Consider some contrasts. Ethnographic research observes human behavior in its natural setting and over a substantial period of time. Quantitative research may even use a laboratory and as short a time span as possible for better control of variables under study. An ethnographic perspective claims that classes of events (e.g., operations of gifted programs) are better understood through intensive examination of carefully selected particular cases. Quantitative research more frequently aims for a satisfactorily large, randomly selected, sample size so that generalizations concerning the total population may be drawn. Ethnographic research intends to incorporate as many of the complexities and variables in the setting as possible, using as many tools as are appropriate. Then such research aims to extract

patterns and explanations of the behaviors observed. Quantitative research tends to simplify with predetermined hypotheses about the key variables and to use a few predetermined measures in a standardized way, measures with a history of as much validity and reliability as possible. Ethnography tends to examine particularly the point of view of the participants in the field. Quantitative research begins with a theory and a research question or hypothesis already formulated and ready to test.

I want to leave no doubt, by the time I have finished, that the process of observing and analyzing in ethnographic methodology is a rigorous and demanding one. But let me conclude at this point with an analogy. Conducting an ethnographic study is <u>not</u> like deciding simply what color to paint a room; it is more like selecting a whole house, garden, and neighborhood to fit the patterns of a particular family. The method, however, can be well worth the time and effort of those interested in gifted education. Worth comes in part because of an inherent holistic and humanistic point of view with explanatory power. Certainly gifted students are people in their own right, and this makes it worthwhile to invest so much time and effort on their behalf.

Using the following chart as a guide, I will

develop the concepts central to ethnographic research, at times taking a somewhat ethnographic approach. I will use two of my own studies to illustrate and contrast. One is a fairly recent study, using an ethnographic perspective, of creative problem-solving in a kindergarten classroom (Lundsteen, 1983; 1985). For contrast, the other is a large traditional experimental and control group study of creative problem-solving that I conducted a number of years ago (fifth grade level) (Lundsteen, 1970). (Creative problem-solving is usually a topic of interest to those in gifted education.) By the time I have finished, I hope to have indicated the research gap in gifted education that ethnographic methods could fill. In essence, then, I will try to present something of a step-by-step approach to conducting ethnographic work, illustrating with my own research, idealized in some instances because I want to offer a model that reflects my best understandings to date.

Insert Figure 1 about here, "Ethno Research"

SIX STEPS IN AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CYCLE

1. Project Selection

My research assistant and I were interested in a

general, broad area at an age level for which we found very little previous research: whether, when, and how creative problem-solving, as influenced by varied learning styles, develops in young children. Our goals, appropriate to an ethnographic perspective, were to explore and to raise new research questions.

2. Access, entry, and rapport

The second step was to gain entry and access in this ethnographic research cycle. We knew we were to be somewhat obtrusive and long-term, "living" in a classroom for a school year. What could we give in return? What would the roles be for my assistant and me? It helped to be familiar with the district and to have been a teacher in it some years ago; it helped to have the strong support of a principal who wanted the stimulation of a couple of researchers in her school (Gooch Early Childhood Center, Dallas Independent School District). We visited likely sites in the spring and began establishing rapport. We were introduced to the teacher drafted by the principal and spoke to parents on their night at the opening of the school year. We were ostensibly "volunteers" in the school, wearing buttons, staying after school to help clean off tables in the room and being helpful in minor ways.

We worked hard on our rapport with the teacher. We

told her that "no way" were we there to judge. We were there as "babes in the woods," to learn with fresh eyes. We would like to consider her a "research collaborator," not demanding too much of her time, but inviting her to learn, explore, and gather information with us. Our efforts must have paid off, for at the end of the year the teacher told us she thought it would be fine if every classroom could have a couple of researchers in it. Being an ethnographer is not a rude business, persistent, yes, but sensitive to the needs and feelings of those cooperating.

Certainly gaining access and entry is important in some quantitative studies. My early, carefully designed experimental study to test varied programs for teaching creative problem-solving almost never came to be because the public school system had felt misused by previous university researchers (Lundsteen, 1970). But because of the almost "live-in," intimate nature of the researcher's role in ethnographic work, this step assumes even greater importance.

3. Question asking and reformulation

Certainly we did not go into Gooch School empty headed. We knew quite a lot about child development in general, and the literature on creative problem-solving and learning style in particular; we knew methodology of

research in general and had a good start on methodology of qualitative kinds; we had some idea of theories in general, and of theories of creativity in particular. The Rosenberg constructs on styles (Rigid-Inhibited, Undisciplined, Acceptance-Anxious, and Creative) intrigued us (Rosenberg, 1968). We wondered if we could see these patterns in young children and the impact of such individual differences on problem solving. We had hunches about the productiveness of the creative style on problem solving. But it was far too premature to devise training programs to promote the creative style and to test for improvement, as might be done in a quantitative study.

Rather than being predetermined before entry, research questions and hypotheses evolved as we learned and described what we saw happening to these young children, their teacher, and their parents, in this setting. Any vague initial questions that we had would undergo much reformulation as we discovered and then verified with as many varied tools as we could muster. We repeated this wave-like mode of inquiry again and again.

4. Data collection methods used for an ethnographic perspective

Although varied levels of participant observation

have typically been thought of as the primary tool used in ethnographic work, an ethnographer might use almost any type of data gathering tool, even a standardized test (but possibly in a highly unstandardized way). The key of multiple ways of looking is referred to as "triangulation." With triangulation, differing kinds of data are examined to look for evidence of corroboration (or just as likely, puzzling differences). One then attempts to construct a meaningful description or explanation of the whole. Just using three measures instead of one does not guarantee triangulation.

The researcher may be reactive or non-reactive while collecting data (Heath, 1985). Reactive means the researcher participates, interacts with the subjects. This reactive division includes: participant observation in varied levels, varied levels of interviewing, surveys, and life histories.

These tools may shape data by the researcher's presence, but they have many advantages. They enabled us to probe for depth, they gave us notions of the meanings that children and those important in their lives had for creative problem-solving, and they enabled us to see particular points of growth and change. We were able to take off our blinders of past experience and view what was happening afresh. Very importantly, we

were able to build trust with the individuals under study. Use of reactive measures showed we were interested in a variety of activities that touched young children's lives--from social problems encountered on the playground or at home, to motor problems in devising creative movements, to artistic problems in designing paper circle collages, to cognitive problems in discovering principles of balance, force, and gravity. A final advantage is that reactive measures such as we used were not strange linguistic phenomena to the individuals involved. They were used to being questioned and interviewed. What we did did not seem sterile or like lab games. To ethnographers this is valuable "context" (to some used to more purely quantitative means, it's "contamination").

On the minus side, when we used our reactive measures for data collection, it was like looking for a "needle in a haystack" at first. What we thought we saw in observation with these measures was difficult to validate. We had to rely on validating our supposed discoveries with many different ways of looking, again and again, on many varied occasions. We used what we thought were internally logical arguments. We and our reactive measures were human, fallible, and not all knowing--and we admitted it.

Closely related to validity is the issue of reliability. In my earlier quantitative study on creative problem-solving, I constructed "objective" tests and tried to make sure that the same question was asked in exactly the same way (via a TV program) at the same time of day and using the same conditions (as possible) in each of 30 classrooms. In the Gooch ethnographic study I could not do that.

To assist reliability we did do three things at Gooch. 1) In my field notes I tried to carefully assess our particular roles. Since we were part of the context, we had to watch ourselves as closely as we watched the children, trying to keep ourselves as objective as possible. 2) We also triangulated our sources of information: What we saw, what the teacher saw, what the parents saw, what the children saw, and even what one of us saw as opposed to the other. (I was fortunate to have an assistant to help validate and look for ways to verify reliability; most ethnographers work alone.) We also have to admit that at Gooch we had a very special and supportive principal, and that the children--for the most part--had the supposed advantages of being middle to upper-middle class. We also had to remind ourselves that those parents most willing to bring us evidences of their children's problem solving

might not represent "typical" parents of that school. They might be exceptionally cooperative and/or interested in research related to child development, or at the other extreme, they might be "fringe" elements who had nothing to lose in associating with us, the "outsiders." 3) To further aid our endeavors for reliability and validity, we had our tapes and field notes which we could reread and play back again, and again, and again, and offer to others for their critical appraisal.

Non-reactive, the other division of data collection tools and sources used in ethnographic research, is exemplified by the following: documents, artifacts, products, physical traces.

Documents we used at Gooch School were the readiness test data that had been administered as part of the district procedure. (We didn't learn much of any use to us from them, but they tended to confirm the general level of verbal skill and skill in performing school-oriented tasks that we saw, and helped describe the sample of children.)

Artifacts included: the nature and complexity of toys that individual children brought to share and the locations of pencils and paper in open access in the homes we visited.

Products included: the stories that the children

dictated; the works of art (clay pieces, collages, "portraits of family," pictures, and stories of how to stop a cat and dog fight); taped responses to the problem of telling the story in a wordless picture book; our records of the children's responses to our on-the-spot devised "junk test," in which children displayed their perceptions of and abstractness of classification (an important dimension in the Rosenberg theories of style); and the seat work the children completed in the mornings.

Physical traces are unobtrusive measures on which one has no opportunity to make any impact. Examples we used were the contents of the children's little cubbies or work boxes, the children's responses to the teacher's directives, or non-directives. For example, C. simply sat all morning in his desk when the teacher did not tell him explicitly what to do. The fact that he did this for almost all of the morning work period was an initial clue to his Rigid-Inhibited style, which we followed and verified in many, many ways.

So far I've said that tools for data collection in this ethnographic discipline can be reactive or non-reactive, mentioning some advantages and disadvantages of the reactive ones and giving some examples from our own work. Reactive or non-reactive, the basic tool of the ethnographer is observation. We

watched the children in the classroom; we looked at the things they made; we listened to the teacher's comments; we examined school records.

Observation thus falls on a continuum of non-reactive to reactive: non-participant observer, transient observer, participant observer, and observing participant (Heath,1985). At the beginning of our Gooch study we tried to be mainly non-participating observers, sitting delicately poised on the fringes, making maps of the room and school, sketching faces, trying to learn names, trying to get our tape recorders to work, and learning to use video equipment. But it is really difficult to be truly non-participating when one is actually in the room with the children. We might ask one what his name is, another might ask us a question, and a third may be noticing where our attention is directed. (A person viewing video-tapes of the children really cannot participate with the children in any way.) Next we became transient observers, wandering through the classroom among the tables, and driving through the community where the children lived.

After the first three weeks we became observing participants, stopping at children's tables and asking questions (usually open-ended ones, such as, "Tell me about your picture."). We answered requests for help

with an interested look, saying, "What could you do about that?" We even followed a child into the washroom who was having trouble getting a paper towel out of the dispenser. We had observed her reliance on adult help before and were interested to see what would happen when we persisted in turning the problem back to her. (When she realized how "useless" we were, she solved the problem herself by using the bathroom tissue for drying.) We were, of course, intruding and changing the children's natural setting, but in this manner we became observing participants in many of the children's natural activities, encouraging their display of problem-solving behavior.

It was not our original intent to set up activities for the children outside of their classroom--we wanted to observe their problem-solving behavior in their natural setting, the classroom, and in the course of their usual activities. However, this kindergarten classroom was academically-oriented, seat-work-oriented, skill-oriented, and work-quietly-at-your-table oriented. We had little opportunity to observe creative problem-solving, but were curious to know what the children were capable of doing.

With some desperation we moved into the participant observer role: we began to plan and devise tasks for

which we would remove individuals and small groups to separate rooms and which would give us an opportunity to observe behaviors of creative problem-solving in contexts of the social, aesthetic, cognitive and motor areas, or mixtures therein. As the planner, organizer, and presenter responsible for that period of time we became regular participant observers with our selected "style" children. We observed with active, interactive roles. We also continued our unobtrusive observation.

As the year progressed, we could not help but have a subtle but definitive impact on the group and the individuals we were studying. The important aspect in ethnographic research is to realize and attempt to describe this impact. We wondered to what extent we had influenced when C., for example, who normally showed few signs of autonomy, volunteered in the late spring to bring his own book to show us. We showed him our wordless picture books, and he responded with "I've got my own book," and bounded away, in a manner that was neither rigid nor inhibited, to get it to show us.

The coding schemes we adapted for assessing problem-solving behaviors we observed were in large part developed, revised, and re-revised on the spot. Figure 2 shows how our observations were organized. It looks rather systematic, but we were flexible and inventive.

Insert Fig. 2 about here "Meas. besides intensive obs."

Much of what we did in the way of observation for the first two months was designed to help us select students for further intensive observation. We wanted to try to determine cases that had a consistent pattern of showing up the behaviors of the four Rosenberg styles and study their problem-solving behaviors intensely, using ourselves as instruments, and the teacher and parents as collaborators. We also relied on the tasks and measures that we specially constructed as we went along. We could not be aggressive movers; we had to wait, look, listen, learn: we had to notice and see as we had never seen before.

Interview is a tool ethnographers define broadly. Some of our interviews with teachers, parents, and children were highly informal, off-the-cuff, unplanned, serendipitous. Some used the teacher as a key informant and were more structured. An example is the "Who in the Class Questionnaire" we devised, incorporating the Rosenberg (1968) behaviors for each style. "Who in the class...frequently seeks teacher contact and approval?" "Who in the class...thinks creatively in new situations?"

We structured a questionnaire for a parental

interview, tapping variables in the Rosenberg theory of styles, problem-solving variables, and attempting to indirectly assess parenting style. One questionnaire we contrived for children was designed to simulate a social problem between animal puppets. Then we had the puppets respond differentially, using language that might be attributed to each of the Rosenberg styles, asking children to indicate what language or puppet response they preferred, and what they thought about it (or why they preferred it). Again, these materials were mainly developed on the spot as the research showed a need for them. What we saw informed us as to our next move.

In contrast, the data gathering tools I used in my first experimental study of creative problem-solving were: three measures to cover each of two variables related to problem solving, as well as problem solving: IQ scores for covariance:, and reading scores to describe the sample. A preconstructed curriculum furnished the treatments. Pre-, post-, and follow-up tests were administered via TV; results were significant. The articles written were accepted for publication: the funding agency, the superintendent, and my dean were pleased. I am still wondering what was really going on.

I tried to get some idea with follow-up interviews with the experimental teachers two years later. (I

wished I had used interviews much earlier.) Their responses convinced me that I should have been there, observing, looking, like a child, freshly. They did tell me to "think young," to get to children early, very early, if I was interested in studying creative problem-solving and in making an impact. I listened, and I did.

Field notes are the ethnographer's best friend. All of these tools and observations go for nothing without the ethnographer's prime tool of field notes. I would like to review the possible kinds and also give some highly practical suggestions for data management when using an ethnographic perspective (Heath, 1985).

Consider using a series of note books. (See Figure 3.) Avoid trying to keep everything in the same place.

Insert Fig. 3, "Field notes management"

Notebook #1 (loose leaf) is for your structured interview data. (We also liked to use file folders organized in a drawer.) We kept parent interview data in chronological order. The note books may be sectioned by personnel: principal, teacher, primary care givers, children. Children's interviews may be further subdivided by time of year (beginning, middle, end).

Note book #2 was for field notes. Suggestions: spiral notebooks with margins on the sides and lines, one for each month. If you are audio taping, we suggest a contents page, saved at the front of each month's notebook, numbering the tapes, so this label can be entered in a column in the field notes to which the tape corresponds.

When we began entering field notes for the month in a note book we made sure we had a double spread. We put field notes on about one third of the page to the right (leaving three columns on that page for other information), and had a blank page free to the left of our notes. (See Figure 3.) We would also begin our entries about a third of the way down, at least at first to leave room for a map or diagram of the room plan for the day. (Since we soon learned that the environment of the classroom rarely changed, early maps sufficed for the rest of the year.) The blank page across from the field notes would be used later; it was important for conceptual notes--reactions, interpretations, questions, and so on.

If we started to take notes at 9:30, we marked the time in the time column. (See Figure 3.) We tried to remember to set our audio tape recorder counter at "0." When we reread our field notes at the same time we

played our tape; verbal cuing to the audio portion of the tape helped. We were able to fill in gaps in the dialogue and listen again to the tone of voice, words stressed, and other cues related to how the words were delivered.

At the beginning of the year we focused our field notes on the entire class, three hours, every day for the first week. Then we began to spot interesting individuals while still observing the group as a whole. The far right column of the field note page indicated who we were watching. Later we tabbed portions and pages with children of particular interest to us. (We photocopied pages and began individual file folders for special style cases.) When we were audio taping, we could concentrate far more on the non-verbal behaviors of the children, but strove for balance on verbal and non-verbal in our notes.

We did not rush to transcribe tapes. We read our notes and listened to the tapes three or four times and made conceptual notes on the left hand side before we took the time to transcribe any tapes. Then we were selective.

The conceptual notes, which we made on the left-hand side, were of several kinds. Some were methodological: (example) "Tomorrow my assistant and I should switch

places, she by the door and I near the teacher's desk." Some were personal: "What is it about that mother I don't like?" I was tempted to write, 'She is still trying to take over the class when she comes in to drop her child off in the mornings.' I am not being objective about her, placing a value judgment on her behavior." Some were inferential: "J. is looking more and more like a likely candidate for Rosenberg's creative style." Some were theoretical: "I wonder if I couldn't use the family pictures (the ones the teacher had the children draw) to see if they are able to figure out the Piagetian task which asks about siblings. Can the child count himself or herself as a brother or sister of a sibling? Perhaps we could ask a little girl who drew herself and her little sister in the family constellation, "Does your sister have a sister?" Any time we had a question with respect to our data, a hunch, or felt we saw a pattern evolving, we shifted to the left-hand page. (Sometimes we drew arrows toward the raw field note data that matched on the right.) Every day after observation (sometimes not until the weekend), we reread our notes, spotted tape portions corresponding to the field notes and added to our conceptual memos of the left-hand side. This review helped us decide what to do next.

The following is a sample double-page spread showing

field notes. (See Figure 4.)

Insert Figure 4, Field note spread, about here

Intellectual history is the label of notebook #3, created after the second month of field work. In this loose leaf notebook we placed longer conceptual memos (dated), photocopying some of the materials from the conceptual memos pages. These longer memos pulled together some of our interview materials, field notes, reviews of recent related literature and other inspirations, hunches, insights and long-range planning. For example, in one of these memos we evolved the following idea: "Why not team up children with different styles together? We could call in a child who had exhibited a more creative style of problem solving, for example, and have that child play with one who had demonstrated one of the less creative styles. Would the more productive problem solver have a beneficial effect on the other child--would some of the more productive approaches "rub off" on the less successful child, or would the very inhibited just put a damper on the whole play session?"

When we acquired ideas from recent readings or lectures, we put them in a running reference section

with the longer conceptual memos, and separately in a running list of bibliographic entries at the back of this notebook. It is here, in this intellectual history, that research hypotheses and reformulation of theory can take shape.

"Putting it all together" is aided by the use of the Intellectual History. As each new set of tasks for the month opened our eyes further about what kindergarten children could and couldn't do about problem solving, we went back to our earlier notes to see if patterns of development or change might have been heralded before in some way.

We began doing <u>monthly summaries</u> (never marking up the original field notes). Summaries were stapled to the front page of each month's notebook. Any transcribed tapes, tapescripts, or other loose pages were stapled to the back. Copies were also put in an individual child's file folder, if deemed appropriate. Patterns emerged as we went back over our field notes again and again. We kept in mind that even child styles that are relatively stable can change. These patterns went into our dated Intellectual History entries. The Intellectual History included only copied portions of verifying tapescripts, interviews, and field note pages. The more time we had to go over our Intellectual History notebook, the more

insightful we became. Review stimulated planning for the next field study in the next setting, (a low socio-economic school). One of the best catalysts for reviewing your notebooks is the preparation of a paper for a professional meeting, and the Intellectual History can be a great help here. Presentations usually necessitate refinements in the next step in the six-step ethnographic cycle, data analysis.

5. Data analysis

First of all, the analysis, as can be seen from the previous description, is inductive, with patterns emerging from the data. Data are analyzed both during and after collection (not just after the post-tests, as in my quantitative study). We did not analyze all the data in June as we were finishing up the ethnographic field study. We analyzed each month as we moved through the data. Some of our analyses were of the discourse related to problem solving, some were of the content displayed in the children's products, such as their responses to wordless picture books, or their clay pieces (and non-verbal, related behaviors). Some of the analyses was aimed at the cognitive process of creative problem-solving, confirmations or refutations of what Piaget seems to have told us. We would like to have done life histories of some of the interesting cases and their

families and school contexts, following up for several years, as was done in my Swedish study of older children (Lundsteen, 1983). An ethnographer may choose one means or several for data analysis. (One means of recent promise is called network analysis.)

6. Products of ethnographic research

This last step in the ethnographic research cycle can take several directions. In general, the product is descriptive, a "thick" description, which conveys a feeling for what the individuals said, did, or indicated they felt. The writing highlights significant meanings held by the participants, from their point of view, and the generic emerges from the particulars.

A successful format for the product may include: 1) a description of the context of the study so that others can compare their contexts to yours; 2) your role in the field study; 3) your data gathering methods; 4) a reduction of the data by plucking out one fully described situation, happening, theme or focus (i.e., a particular type of behavior or topic studied); 5) a relating of what was happening to your central theme (with confirmations, if any, from the related literature); and 6) an exploration of issues and suggestions for other comparative studies (Heath, 1985). An ethnographic product, whether book or article, is a literary genre but

with a research discipline of its own. A metaphor may help to describe and highlight your theme. Thus you can see that ethnography is both a process and a product.

These, then, are six steps the total pattern of which is descriptive of much ethnographic work as currently (or hopefully) practiced. As suggested in the beginning, it is more complex than simply deciding which color to paint a room (or which hypothesis to select, which random sample, which research design, and which statistical technique, at which level of significance). It is more like selecting a whole house, garden, and neighborhood to fit patterns of your family. The ethnographer takes charge, internalizes, and owns, but does not place a value judgment on the people studied.

What is the relation and advantage of an ethnographic approach to gifted education (with some samples of illustrative research)?

In the selection of one gifted program as opposed to another, the ethnographer needs to consider how what one finds in that setting is representative of what occurs in other gifted programs. Also of interest is how results can lead to explaining the relation of this program to others. (We do not need a mass of mere concrete detail.) A strength related to this point is evidenced by the Lutz and Lutz (1981) study. Several

patterns of social interaction among gifted children were abstracted. The researchers noticed, for example, greater voluntary social interaction among the gifted students during the time they were attending the pull-out program. While with their usual classmates, however, they tended to prefer children not in the gifted program, but who were nevertheless bright. Did the gifted children in this study like having a best friend who was a little less gifted than they because they enjoyed the lack of competition in such a relationship? Is this a general pattern among gifted students? These hypotheses can be further tested in other settings. Finally, worthy ethnographic study can produce a description so that others can see the generic in the particular. Such a strength can be seen in the Lutz study, where the gifted children apparently longed for a less competitive world.

By analogy, the strength of ethnography is in its background tapestry--busily detailed, seemingly chaotic (Heath, 1982). But upon a closer look, an ethnography reveals patterns, and with repeated scrutiny, may reveal yet other patterns, as in the Speck (1984) or in the Kitano (1985) or in the Kramer (1985) studies. Upon this tapestry may be placed the studies of others in an effort to explain as fully as possible factors that help determine success or failure of gifted programs and

gifted children, or, more importantly, principles that explain the processes of stability and change, while at the same time providing vivid details and concreteness that allows a reader to identify with situations described.

In conclusion, it may be helpful to suggest some sample research questions, amenable to an ethnographic stance.

Some Questions for Ethnographic Research:

Gifted Program Context

1. What are the social roles gifted children play during their education?
2. What are the rules the children and teachers in this gifted classroom have to know, produce, predict, and evaluate in order to participate?
3. How do participants in gifted programs hold one another accountable in relationship to tasks?
4. What are the varieties of processes and materials available for the gifted to choose from? How are these interacting with gifted abilities and education?
5. What are social interactional consequences of varying innovations in gifted education? (Innovations might refer to, for example, pullout programs, mentors, special projects.)

6. How do teachers of gifted children orchestrate different participation levels? (For example, consider competitive, cooperative, and individual activities.)
7. Why are materials in this gifted program placed and used as they are?
8. In what contexts do gifted abilities flourish?
9. What other cases and contexts support, contradict, or expand present findings?

In general--"What's going on here?"

Some Final Recommendations

In conclusion, consider these recommendations.

1. Become conversant with a number of qualitative fieldwork tools and techniques, especially interactive and non-interactive observation.
2. Read case studies and work using ethnographic perspectives: they will illustrate how to apply tools and techniques to actual situations.
3. When you are trying to understand what's going on in your setting, strive to provide for more rather than fewer factors about (e.g.) evaluation of gifted education. Some research and evaluation methods (e.g., quantitative) have a tendency to oversimplify and constrict.

4. Develop a concern for a broad context. This attending to context may be the most important contribution of this kind of research, making research more natural, true-to-life, interesting, and valuable to teachers and their administrators.

5. Write some field notes yourself. Keep different types of notes separate--observations, personal feelings, theoretical, and methodological. Read them over, and over, and over, conceptualizing as you go along.

6. Set up a field note workshop and clinic with peers.

7. Share your "ethnographic perspective" education with "significant others" (parents, administrators, legislators).

8. See if some of your older gifted children can develop and use methods and constructs using an ethnographic perspective.

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Figure 1

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH (A Compendium of Concepts)

Origin of methods: anthropology

Behavior studied: real-life human processes as they occur

Setting: natural environment of subjects under study

Time: extended time span for observation of full cycle of events; study of historical, evolutionary processes

Theory: well-grounded, but flexible, adapt to emerging data

Qualifications of Researcher
- knowledgeable about unit of study, ethnographic research
- ability to relate to people with understanding and respect
- lack of ethnocentrism
- aware of personal biases
- willing to be flexible

Process of Research: rigorous; equal time given to data collection and data analysis

Data Collection: multiplicity of methods to permit corroboration
- key means of obtaining data: observation
  - --interactive: researcher participates, interacts with subjects (participant observation, questions, interviews, surveys, life histories, etc.)
  - --non-interactive: researcher examines records (video-tapes, written records, artifacts, etc.)
- field notes recorded (observations, personal reactions, methodology, hypotheses and mapping)
- key instrument: researcher--using trained, prepared human beings to help us understand human behavior
- data elicited beyond what we already know or would obviously expect--provide new understandings

Data Analysis: inductive (patterns emerge from data)
- data analysis done both during and after data collection, analysis influencing new collection of data
- content analysis
- data reduction--to permit examination of emerging patterns
- triangulation--corroboration through multiple sources
- coding categories--quantifying chosen patterns

Product of Research: descriptive
- "thick" description conveying a feel of what people said, did, or indicated they were feeling
- meaning conveyed, from the subjects' viewpoints
- definition of units (topics and/or people) studied, so that comparison and synthesis may be made with studies of other groups, other topics, and other times
- particulars described so that generic may be understood

(Ideas gathered from Bogden & Biklen, 1982; Guba, 1978; Heath, 1982; Wolcott, 1980.)

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Fig. 2, MEASUREMENT BESIDES INTENSIVE OBSERVATION (Project: Development of Problem Solving in Young Child)

Setting: Gooch School
America

(What Measure, Given to Whom, by Whom, and When)

MEASURES	N	Admin.: indiv.; Small Group	N of E	How Often Administered	When or Over what Period	Comments
I. FOR BASELINE INFOR.						
1. Conservation tasks (Piagetian)	22	Indiv.	1 experimentor	1	Sep.-Oct.	4 tasks: 1. number (with chips) 2. mass (with play-doh) 3. draw-a-diamond 4. ask child about siblings while looking at drawing of family
2. Paper Circles (art collage)	22	Sm. Group	1	1	Sep.-Oct.	
3. Dictated Story	22 10	Indiv.	1	3	Sep.-Oct.	For selected subjects, compare beginning, middle, and end
4. Sorting task ("Junk test")	22	Indiv.	2 teams	1	Sep.-Oct.	Used for determining verbal use of abstract, funct. and concrete language and thought, to check approach style
5. The "Burr & Meese" puppet presentation videotaped	10	Indiv.	2	2	Sep.-Oct.	Puppets' verbalizations fit varied learning/solving styles
6. DISD Reading & Math Readiness Test	22	Sm. Group	Tchr.	1	Sep.-Oct.	Relate these scores to other info. gathered
7. "Who in the Classroom"	1 Tchr.	To tchr. (re children)	2	1	Sep.-Oct.	A questionnaire admin. to teacher re Child Style
II. FOR COLLECTING DATA ON SUBJECTS & FOR COMPARISON	1 Tchr.	to tchr. (re children)				
1. Video taping of discussion, puppet script #1, "Elwood"	22	Sm. Group	Tchr. 2 Exper.	3	Dec., (Feb. & Apr.)	The 10 subjects in two groups, 5 ea., (rest of the class in a 3rd) All Videotaped. A coding scheme, "Problem Solving Objective Scale for Child" is applied.

MEASURES	N	Admin.: Ind. or Small Grp.	N of E	How Often Admin.	When	Comments
2. Tasks or activities to stimulate problem solving to observe in diff. contexts						
a. Social	10-22	Indiv./ Sma. Grp.	2	3	Once/mo., Nov.to Apr.	10 subjects, (plus any others in class interested) e.g., "Cooperative Village"
b. Cognitive	10-22	Indiv./ Sma. Grp.	2	3	Once/mo., Nov.to Apr.	E.g., Kamii rollers, De Bono task, wordless picture book task
c. Aesthetic (Arts)	10-22	Indiv./ Sma. Grp.	2	3	Once/mo. Nov. to Apr.	E.g., play, child's own puppet scenario, "I am the Master" movement
III. FOR COLLECTING DATA ON PARENTS						
1. Parents interview	10	Indiv. 2 parents (if poss.)	2	1	Jan.	Comes after informal observation, openhouse & conversation after parent/teacher, conference with subjects' parent(s)
2. Parent and Child prob. solv. task.	10	2 parents (if poss.)	2	1	Feb.	Audio taped
3. Parents teach the child some task	10	2 parents (if poss.)	2	1	Apr.	Audio taped
IV. TEACHER	1		2	Ea. Puppet discussion	During data analysis period	Use "Check list of Teacher Behaviors" (Re Guidance of Young Child. P.Solv. Behavior)

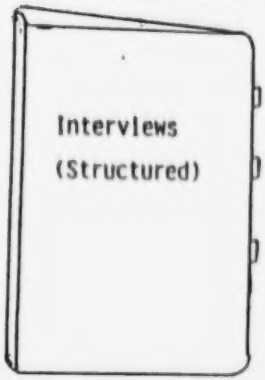
Note re the above chart: this was not all predetermined before we went in. Most was necessitated by, or prompted by, what we observed. Measures often created "on the spot" to meet evolving needs and interests.

Figure 3

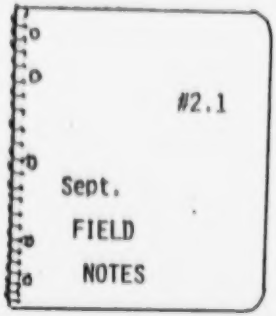
FIELD NOTES MANAGEMENT

SUGGESTED SERIES OF NOTEBOOKS OR SECTIONS

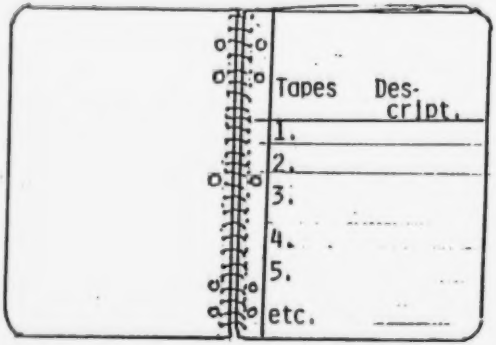
#1 (loose leaf)



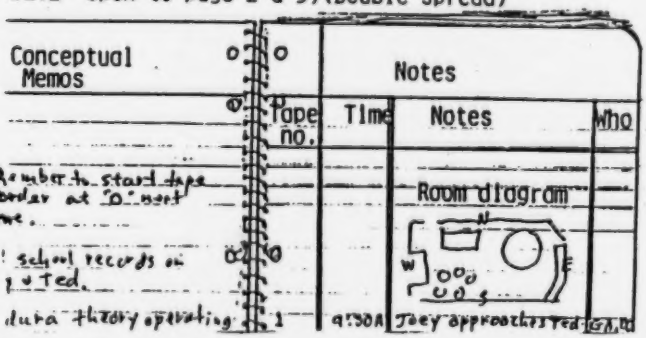
#2.1 (etc.)
(Monthy field notes collected)



(#2.1 (open to first page)



#2.1--open to page 2 & 3)(Double spread)



#3 Intellectual History
(See Figure 5 & sample.)

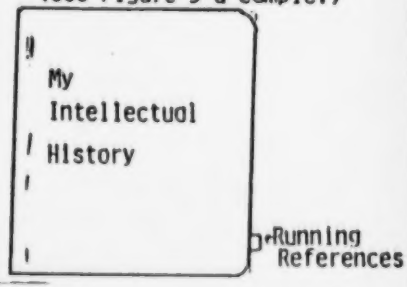


Fig. 4 Field Notes

FIELD NOTES

This is a right-hand page of a notebook.

Tape #	Date, Time	Notes	Group or Individual
		Room map Centers House-keeping Blocks w/ trucks Books Cubbies Easel Board Work table E. J. Tables Carpet for circle time Teacher's desk	
(No tape today)	9/15/79	Setting: Classroom, children are going from one assignment to the next, as they complete each one. J. and E. are working on their maths papers. Assignment is to copy the numeral 6 and then draw and color the correct number of boats.	
	9:30	J asks, "Do we color now?" "What color do we use?" He has completed 2 boats, which occupy about half the page, and has started to use a blue crayon. E looks at J's paper 3 times and looks toward teacher. J is using blue crayon to put "water" under the boats. E tells	J E

Fig. 4 Field Notes

This is the left-side page of a notebook. This one follows the page with the map of the classroom.

Date	Conceptual Notes
9/15/79 (PM)	Is E being a "little mother"? Is she criticizing or trying to prevent J's getting into trouble? Watch her other behavior – is she trying to please (protect?) (acceptance-anxious) or is she trying to be difficult (undisciplined)?
9/15/79 (PM)	J's solution to the "boats" problem is very exciting. He was able to "correct" his maths work very gracefully and "snatch victory from the jaws of defeat." He also spoke quite assertively to E, although he did go to the teacher, so may have been somewhat unsure of what to do. High level of creative problem solving indicated – see how he responds to "junk" test. Is his level of abstraction consistent with a creative style?

Fig. 4 Field Notes

This is a right-hand page of a notebook, opposite some conceptual notes on the left.

Tape #	Date, Time	Notes	Group or Individual
	9/15/79 (cont.)	him, "You will not have enough room to fit all six boats on the page." J answers, "I will, too." Then he looks at his paper again and goes to ask the teacher. She tells him to make his boats smaller.	
	9:40	I went by his table and saw his work. I asked him how he had solved his problem. He said, "I made them smaller (pointing to latter 4 boats) and I made them submarines." He also told me that the propellers were to make the boats move.	J.

Figure 5

SAMPLE OF AN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

October

We're getting a little frustrated because we're not finding as many incidents of spontaneous problem solving as we would like, and certainly not the variety we would like to see. The children are allowed very little freedom of movement, so it is difficult to ~~see~~ observe problem solving in a motor context. In addition, the teacher is moving into more "serious" work, organizing reading groups and so on, and is becoming more insistent on quiet during work periods. This cuts us off from overhearing children discuss problems and their solutions in a natural way. We are hesitant to ask children questions when they have just been told to be quiet.

Maybe we'll try taking the children out of the room and working with them individually or in small groups.

January

We've been taking the children out of the classroom and we're certainly getting more information ~~of~~ about their problem-solving abilities and their way of coping with situations. Several of the children do act very close to ~~the~~ what we expect, in respect to their styles. Of course, they're full of surprises, too. One of the undisciplined children behaves very correctly when we work with him one on one, but his verbalizations continue to reveal an undisciplined approach. Not that he says rude things to us, but the content of his verbal solutions shows that he still considers hitting and other forceful means of getting his

way to be effective solutions to problems. In a group he shows much more acting-out behavior and has to be watched carefully. He was very disruptive today with another child, and this really interfered with the problem solving process. If we're going to have small groups, perhaps we should not have those two together, unless we just have the two and try to work on their interpersonal differences and use that as a problem-solving opportunity. (I guess we'll try not to overload our groups with undisciplined ones.)

February

We want to video tape the teacher doing a problem solving discussion. Since we need small groups to enable all the children to participate well, we are trying to decide which children to put in each group. Perhaps we'll try to have at least one from each style--that way we can demonstrate the uniqueness of each style's approach to the presented problem.

March

We want to call the children into a room and work with rollers and other objects, as suggested by Kamii for the development of a child's knowledge about physical objects. Perhaps three children at a time? We don't want to go in and grab the first three we find any more; we want to plan the groups. Why don't we see what happens when we have one of each style in a group--or what happens when we put all of the same style together? There could be some interesting possibilities here as to how

the composition of the groups in respect to style affects the performance of the group. From now one, we intend to plan our groups with style in mind.

April

We want to do an activity which has even less guidance than the last one. We plan to take in a Fisher-Price toy that depicts a village with little people, cars, furniture,etc. We'll take children into the room where we work, and already have the toys on the floor (in a predetermined manner, so it will be the same for all the children. We won't even give instructions this time, just sit down and observe what they do ; they will give even the initial structure to the situation. We are curious to see what pairs of children will do, and now we want to systematically pair the different styles to see if we can observe any trends. This will have to be repeated with different situations, of course, but it seemed to us that while we were watching the work with the rollers that the creative children had a good effect on the undisciplined ones--they seemed to know how to handle them, and still carry on. The acceptance-anxious children did not seem to try as many different things if they were with other children like themselves, but seemed to enjoy the company of the creative children. Let's see what happens now when we deliberately pair them, one style with another, and they have little recourse but to ignore or interact with

the one other child present in the room.

May

It was definitely interesting to see the interaction of the children with the Fisher-Price village. One rigid-inhibited child came in with a creative child. The rigid-inhibited child wasn't sure what to do; he was awaiting instruction. The creative child seemed surprised that he was wondering what to do. "Well, play, of course," he said with enthusiasm as he bounced to the ground, and proceeded to investigate what was there. Upon observing the other child, the rigid-inhibited child did not insist on getting concrete directions from the adults present, but he did check with the creative child one more time before beginning to pick things up and look at them. The example of the creative child seemed to permit this child to get going earlier than he would have otherwise done. However, they played very much on their own--each doing his own thing. The creative child is certainly capable of doing this and being very rich in his play. The rigid-inhibited child might have benefitted more, however, if say an acceptance-anxious child (with more of a need to socialize) had drawn him in more to the game. There are interesting suggestions of the possibilities of combining styles, pairing children for certain tasks, and so on, but of course we'll need to observe it many more times to see if there is any real pattern here.